

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, June 27, 1876, with transcript

COPY Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 27, 1876 Cambridge, Massachusetts June 27th, 1876 Dear Papa and Mamma:

Just returned from Philadelphia where I have met with a glorious success.

I was brought into direct competition with Elisha Gray, who had complicated a beautifully made apparatus to exhibit. He, however, is not a Scientific man and had to get Prof. Barker of the Pennsylvania University to explain the instrument for him.

There were about 50 persons present and I took my stand among the crowd. The Emperor and Sir William sat in the centre. Presently Dom Pedro in glancing round caught sight of me and recognized me as having been introduced to him in Boston.

When Gray's exhibit was over Dom Pedro came up to me and shook hands — Thanked me for the works descriptive V. S. — and asked "What news I brought of the Deaf and Dumb of Mass."

Sir William and Dom Pedro then came to see my apparatus — and I explained that while Mr. Gray accomplished the transmission of musical notes by very expensive apparatus — I accomplished the same thing by means of instruments costing two cents per note .

Gray's instrument must have cost from \$15.00 to \$20.00 per note.

Gray attempted (unsuccessfully) to send two messages simultaneously. Those who received the messages placed their ears close to the Instrument and tried (each one) to recognize the signals of one pitch and ignore those of the other. I showed my apparatus for working with a Morse Sounder. I had two instruments arranged upon circuit upon the table — and two keys, one for the Emperor — and the other for Sir William. They transmitted signals — successfully singly and together. I then explained the "Undulatory Theory" and offered to test the transmission of the human voice. I stated however that this was "an invention in embryo."

I trusted they would recognize firstly that the pitch of the voice was audible and secondly that there was an effect of articulation.

I then went into a distant room and sang into the telephone. Willie Hubbard told me what happened.

Sir William listened and heard my voice distinctly. I then articulated the sentence "Do you understand what I say". Sir William started up exclaiming "Do you understand what I say." He listened and said "Yes — do you — understand — what I say." He then exclaimed quite excitedly "Where is Mr. Bell — I must see Mr. Bell." Willie pioneered the way — but Sir William ran along before him and came suddenly upon me shouting "Do you understand what I say" — He said "I heard the words "what I say" — He then requested me to sing and then recite something. Willie told me afterwards that he listened to my voice and then started up with the exclamation "To be or not to be".

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The Emperor then listened and exclaimed in surprise in his broken English "I have heard — I have heard" — and then listened again.

Some others present, also listened and one exclaimed "Yes, I heard — Ay! There's the rub." Indeed it was a great and glorious success. Sir William Thomson stated his desire to bring Lady Thomson to see my instruments.

I said I was sorry I had to leave for Boston that evening, but introduced Willie, who is competent to exhibit my apparatus.

Sir William agreed to meet him on Monday evening at seven o'clock.

Mr. Gray had a long talk with me in which we have explained away all matters in dispute — and have decided that it may be advantageous to both of us to unite our interests so as to control the Western Union Telegraph Company — if those associated with us can be brought to a mutual understanding.

This is probably the end of the lawsuit between Gray and myself.

Union of interests probably means fortune and fame to both of us. Separation of interests will lead to protracted lawsuits and the ultimate result will be that the Western Union can step in and buy up whatever part they choose. I am so glad to get back to Cambridge and to May — and Mabel, Mrs. Hubbard and all the family are glad to have me back. I have just received your card announcing the arrival of Uncle Edward and Cousin Frances. I wish I could go home now but I am too busy. Shall write again tonight.

Your loving son, ALEC